



Focus on

Food Safety

Food and Dairy Division

Keep Your Food Safe During a Power Outage

Power outages caused by severe weather or other disasters can cause some challenges to keeping perishable foods and drinking water safe and wholesome. By following some simple, but important, food and water safety precautions you can help protect your family's food during a power outage.

When in doubt, throw it out!

When a power outage occurs, follow these important food and water safety tips:

- If flooding has occurred, discard any foods that have come into contact with flood waters.
- Drink only approved or chlorinated water if your area has sustained damage from tornadoes or other storms; follow any 'boil water' alerts issued by health and safety personnel in your area, especially for water used for washing or cooking.
- Discard any items that may contain particles of glass or slivers of debris, and throw away food in dented cans or in cans with broken seams.
- If a power outage has occurred, keep the refrigerator/freezer door closed as much as possible to maintain adequate temperature.
- Always discard anything that turns moldy, or has an unusual color or odor.
- Perishable refrigerated foods (meats, poultry, fish, dairy products, eggs, etc.) should be thrown out if they reach temperatures warmer than 40°F for more than two hours.
- Frozen foods that thaw and reach temperatures above 40°F should be discarded.

Refrigerated foods will generally be safe as long as the power is not out for more than a few hours and the doors have remained closed.

A full, free-standing freezer will stay at freezing temperatures for about two days; a half-full freezer about one day. If a freezer isn't full, group packages together so they stay colder longer. If power may be out for several days, use dry ice or ice blocks to maintain temperatures. Twenty-five pounds of dry ice should maintain freezing temperatures in a 10-cubic foot freezer for about four days.

For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/foodsafety or www.foodsafety.gov; or call the U.S. Food and Drug Administration Food Information Line at 888-SAFE-FOOD. You may also call a Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) office near you. A listing of MSUE offices can be found at www.msue.msu.edu.